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ABSTRACT

PRISM, the Pittsburgh Research-Based Instructional Supervisory Model, was initiated when the superintendent convened an Instructional Leadership Committee (ILC) to develop a plan for improving instruction and instructional leadership within the district. The Pittsburgh Public Schools' Learning Research Development Center then conducted a districtwide needs assessment on which the ILC based its 3- to 5-year implementation program. On the basis of this program, the four assistant directors for staff development prepared a plan of action. In consultation with selected administrators and teachers, the Staff Development Team (SDT) established a training program applicable to all Pittsburgh public schools and at all grade levels. Following several 1-day administrator inservice meetings, a total of 200 administrators were trained in 5-day inservice sessions conducted by the SDT for groups of no more than 40. Following sets of recommendations developed by the ILC and the SDT, PRISM is working toward a personnel evaluation plan for wider school-based implementation. The PRISM training process has followup components for every phase and is built on a sequence of five components essential to any staff program: (1) presentation of theory, (2) modeling or demonstration, (3) practice under simulated conditions, (4) structured feedback, and (5) coaching for application. (JBM)

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PRISM--PITTSBURGH'S RESEARCH BASED INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISORY MODEL FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT[2]

The research describing effective staff development programs suggests a series of essential factors necessary for success. This section lists those factors as subheadings and describes how PRISM, The Pittsburgh Research-based Instructional Supervisory Model, reflected them in its planning and implementation phases.

Have Active Administrative Support and Appropriate Organizational Changes. The superintendent convened an Instructional Leadership Committee to develop a plan for more effective instruction and to improve instructional leadership for the district. Both the superintendent and other central staff administrators were part of the committee. In addition the committee members included a cross-section of principals, supervisors, program specialists and teachers. The Instructional Leadership Committee's task was viewed as a high priority for Pittsburgh with meetings occurring regularly and during work hours.

Come From an Objective Assessment of Staff Needs and Organizational Goals. The Learning Research and Development Center and the Pittsburgh Public Schools

[2]This section was written by Dr. Ann Marshall, Assistant Director of Staff Development.

conducted a district-wide needs assessment; the general objective of the assessment was to identify conditions in the District that could and should be improved. Personnel Evaluation emerged from the survey as one of the most consistently mentioned problem areas in the District; the Board of Education specified it as one of its top priorities. A large number of comments about evaluation suggested that mutually agreed upon goals that reflect both system and job objectives must be developed. This recommendation was the basis of the charge given to the Instructional Committee.

Be Planned and Systematic and Have a Central District Coordinating Group. The Instructional Leadership Committee recommended an overall plan for the proposed program, the focus of which was a model for improved instruction and supervision. The program was to be further defined and adapted for implementation by a core group of four full-time staff developers who would have direct responsibility for phasing the program into the district over a three to five year period.

Using the committee's report as their base, the four Assistant Directors for Staff Development, who came from the ranks of school and central staff administrators, wrote a specific plan of action which they reviewed with their part-time director, the superintendent, and the Instructional Leadership Committee before putting the plan into action.

Be Practical, Flexible, Accepted by the Intended Group, and Provide Choice Where Possible. The Instructional Leadership Committee developed several categories of skills, knowledge and attitudes that any effective leader should possess. It was from those categories that their search for appropriate instructional and supervisory models emerged. The program selected and developed was applicable to all Pittsburgh Public schools and at all grade levels. Thus the committee selected and developed a program which would enhance the skills and knowledge of its intended participants. In the development and implementation of

their action plan the Staff Development Team provided the participants with choice of training dates--all of which took place within the workday, allowed administrators to select their own cadre of teachers in the initial phases of training, made changes in the training in response to written evaluations and comments, and invited a consulting group of administrators to help design further plans.

Support Individual or Small Group Learning with Peers. As an introduction to the program, there were several one day in-service meetings which served as an overview of PRISM for different administrative groups. Administrators with similar assignments were selected to each meeting so that both the explanation and questions would be applicable to their specific responsibilities.

For the five day PRISM in-service which followed there was a concerted effort to train principals with the supervisors with whom they most often worked, or to identify teams of administrators who would implement the model together at the school site. The size of each training group was no more than forty, and there were occasions in the training when that size group was further subdivided. Further the central staff administrators, e.g., superintendent, and assistant superintendents, received their training as a separate group. A total of 200 administrators were trained in this manner. While all personnel received the same content in their training, the examples and activities were tailored to their particular roles and expected involvement in implementation of the program. The Staff Development Team conducted the five day training sessions for each group.

Have an Evaluation of the Program. As part of its responsibility to the Needs Assessment process, the Learning Research and Evaluation Center monitored the meetings of the Instructional Leadership Committee. Thereafter the Staff Development Team developed its own set of evaluations which were completed by

each trained group of administrators.

Also, the set of recommendations from the Instructional Leadership Committee included a charge to develop a set of criteria for certifying other personnel to assist with the training. The Staff Development Team produced a document which describes the type of teacher who should serve as part of the initial training practice for administrators. According to other sources and recommendations, including the factors being discussed herein, it was determined that administrators within the system should train teachers as the model expanded. With a commitment to a formative evaluative approach PRISM attempts to use these various research and data sources as a sound basis for verifying or modifying program components.

The district-wide Needs Assessment identified a need to set educational goals for the district. PRISM is Pittsburgh's response to the goal of improving Personnel Evaluation. Therefore, there is a multi-faceted effect to the whole evaluation factor. Each evaluative decision has been or will be based on appropriate data and/or research.

In addition there are plans for the District and the University of Pittsburgh to co-develop an evaluation plan as the program moves into wider school-based implementation.

Provide Follow-up. PRISM has been defined as an evolving process with various stages occurring over a three to five year period. Each stage of training has its own follow-up components with written instructions of phases for the participants to engage in after each stage of training. In addition, the Staff Development Team members spend a considerable portion of their time in the schools working with the administrators as they practice refining their skills according to the model.

Include Five Essential Components in Any Staff Program.

1. Presentation of theory
2. Modeling or demonstration
3. Practice under simulated conditions
4. Structured feedback
5. Coaching for application.

The PRISM training process used each of these factors in the order presented. The initial five days of training program and the follow-up were built in that sequence, but also each individual segment followed that five step process where appropriate.

On the fourth day of training participants had the opportunity to apply their learning under simulated conditions and receive structured feedback from their peers by teaching in small groups.

The essential component which is frequently omitted from staff development program is coaching for application. The Staff Development Team spends a considerable portion of their time in the schools working again through the whole process on site with the trained administrator(s).

In conclusion it should be noted that PRISM is comprised of three stages:

> PRISM I is the effort described above designed to improve the quality of supervision of instruction resulting in instructional improvement.
>
> PRISM II is a long range plan, yet to be developed that will formally address the need to improve instructional leadership skills of principals.
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> PRISM III is a program planned to increase teaching effectiveness at the secondary school level. The Schenley High School Teacher Center is planned to open in September, 1983. The following is a description of that proposed program.